

CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION
Wednesday, November 18, 2009
6th Floor Conference Room
Council Office Building

Commission Members Present:

Nancy Soreng, Chair
Michael Cogan
Karen Czapanskiy
Wilbur Friedman
Mollie Habermeier
Robert Shoenberg
Moshe Starkman
Judith Vandegriff
Anne Marie Vassallo
Charles Wolff

Staff:

Justina Ferber, County Council
Marie Jean-Paul, County Council
Marc Hansen, County Attorney's Office
Amanda Mihill, County Council

Guests:

Dale Tibbits, Office of Councilmember Elrich

Absent:

Alice Gresham Bullock, Vice-Chair

Commission Chair Nancy Soreng began the meeting at 8:12 a.m.

I. Charter Section 310

The Commission discussed the meeting they had with Chief Administrative Officer Timothy Firestine in October regarding a proposal to amend Charter §310 to allow the County to set aside funding above the 5% limit to be used when revenue collections do not meet revenue projections.

The Commission decided not to pursue this issue and recommended that the 2010 Report reflect that the Commission considered the issue, discussed it with certain County personnel, and decided not to pursue it. Motion made by Michael Cogan and seconded by Wilbur Friedman.

In favor: Michael Cogan, Wilbur Friedman, Mollie Habermeier, Robert Shoenberg,
Nancy Soreng, Moshe Starkman, Judith Vandegriff, Anne Marie Vassallo (8)

Oppose: Charles Wolff (1)

II. Special Taxing Districts

The Commission received a memorandum from Commissioner Friedman indicating that he was interested in pursuing the issue of whether to exclude special taxing districts from the Charter §305 limit. Commission members discussed this issue and generally decided not to pursue the issue further. Commission members who were opposed to recommending this Charter amendment gave the following reasons:

- Unease that the Planning Board or Council would use this tool a lot.
- The potential for balkanization of the County.

- An area can try to incorporate if they want the power to tax themselves.
- The Council should have the authority to distribute funds throughout the County as it sees fit.
- The idea of a special taxing district to establish a bus rapid transit system illustrated what the pressure would be to increase the cap over time and the use of special taxing districts would become the rule.
- The potential, especially with a special taxing district to establish a bus rapid transit system, that the entire County would benefit from a project, but only a part of the County would pay for it.

Commissioners discussed the 2010 Report and generally agreed to include information in the Report indicating that the Commission recommended against the Ficker amendment in the 2008 Report, but members did not feel that 2010 was the appropriate time to place this issue on the ballot again. Commissioners also generally agreed that the 2010 Report should indicate that a number of Commission members were concerned about the supermajority requirements in the Charter.

III. Redistricting Commission

Commission members discussed a memorandum from Commissioner Wolff requesting that the Commission study changing the Charter to provide for a nonpartisan Redistricting Commission that would draw district boundary lines based on set guidelines. The memorandum will be incorporated into these minutes.

Commission members identified that the following information would be helpful in studying the issue:

- What have previous Commission Reports said about the issue?
- What happens in other counties?
- Are there other state models that are good models?
- Should the Commission hold a public forum on this issue?
- What criteria should be used in establishing boundaries?

The Commission decided to do an initial study to determine whether the Commission should take up this issue for the 2010 Report. At the December meeting, the Commission may decide to further pursue the issue. Motion made by Judith Vandegriff and seconded by Wilbur Friedman.

In favor: Michael Cogan, Karen Czapanskiy, Wilbur Friedman, Mollie Habermeier, Robert Shoenberg, Judith Vandegriff, Charles Wolff (7)

Oppose: Anne Marie Vassallo (1)

Abstain: Nancy Soreng, Moshe Starkman (2)

The following Commission members agreed to form a Redistricting Subcommittee to perform the initial research required to present information to the Commission at its December meeting: Michael Cogan, Karen Czapanskiy, Wilbur Friedman, Mollie Habermeier, Judith Vandegriff, Charles Wolff.

IV. Administrative Items

The Commission approved the October 14 minutes. Motion made by Karen Czapanskiy and seconded by Michael Cogan.

In favor: Michael Cogan, Karen Czapanskiy, Wilbur Friedman, Mollie Habermeier, Robert Shoenberg, Nancy Soreng, Moshe Starkman, Judith Vandegriff, Anne Marie Vassallo, Charles Wolff (10)

The meeting was adjourned at 9:24 a.m.

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